

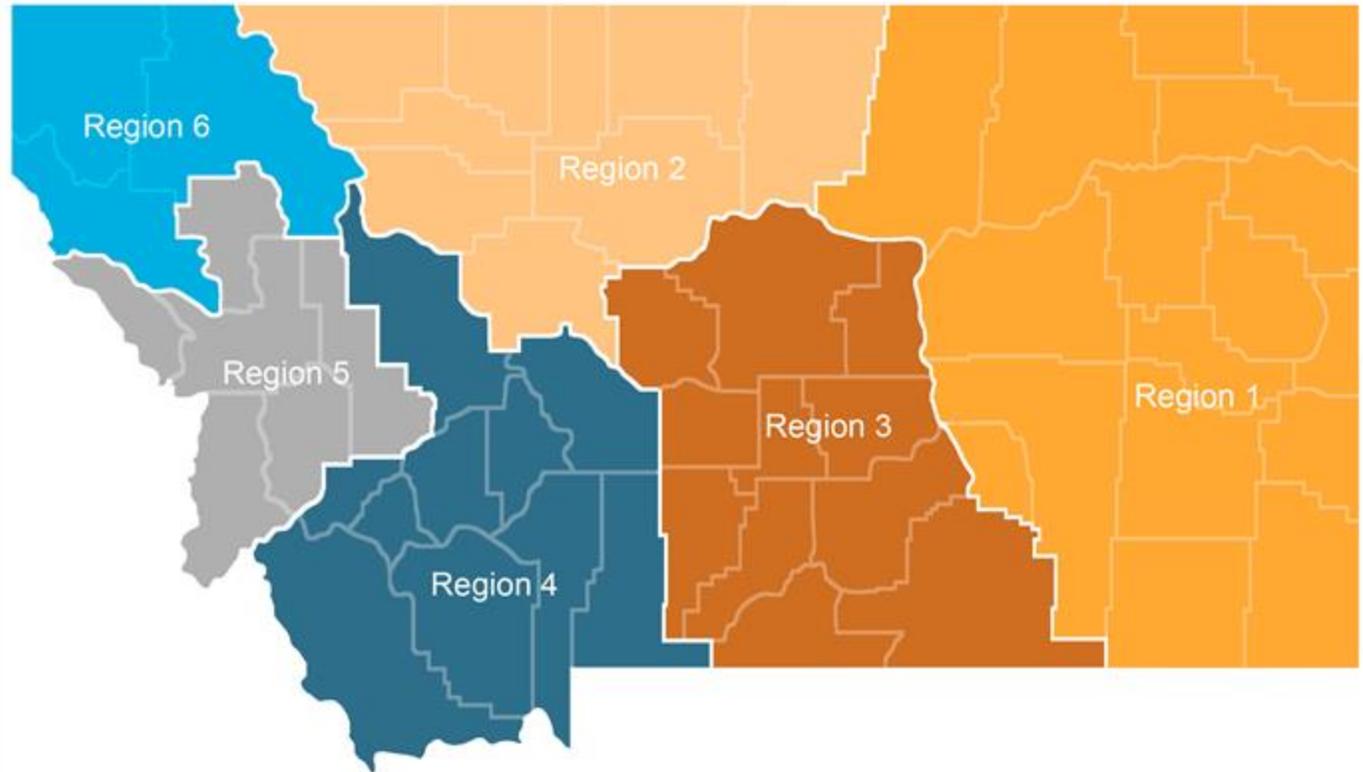


# Kids in Care: Analysis of Population Trends and Management Processes in Montana's Foster Care System

**Child and Family Services Division**  
**Department of Health and Human Service**  
19P-01 • January 2022

# CFS&D Regions

- Regional Offices
  - Region 1: Miles City
  - Region 2: Great Falls
  - Region 3: Billings
  - Region 4: Butte
  - Region 5: Missoula
  - Region 6: Kalispell
- Figure: Pg. 1



# SAMS Process

Pg. 3 in the Report

## The Multiple steps within SAMS



- **Receive the Report**
  - report received by centralized intake investigated if criteria met
- **Assess the Situation**
  - immediate danger assessment
- **Is There Present Danger**
  - if immediate danger is identified a present danger plan is implemented
- **Protection Plan**
  - if the protection plan removes the child involuntarily from the home emergency protective services is filed.
- **Family Function Assessment**
  - ffa is completed in 30 days if child is removed from the home and 60 days if the child remains in the home
- **Safety Threats**
  - if impending safety threats are identified an in or out of home safety plan is put in place
- **Child Removal**
  - if child is removed during investigative process the court process begins



# Audit Objective

- Has the safety-based model used by the Department of Public Health and Human Services to investigate alleged instances of child abuse or neglect led to an increase in the number of children in foster care in Montana?

# Montana Comparison to Other States

- ▶ Child Welfare Agencies and Models Vary by State
- ▶ 16 Kids in Care per 1,000
- ▶ 2<sup>nd</sup> Highest in the Nation

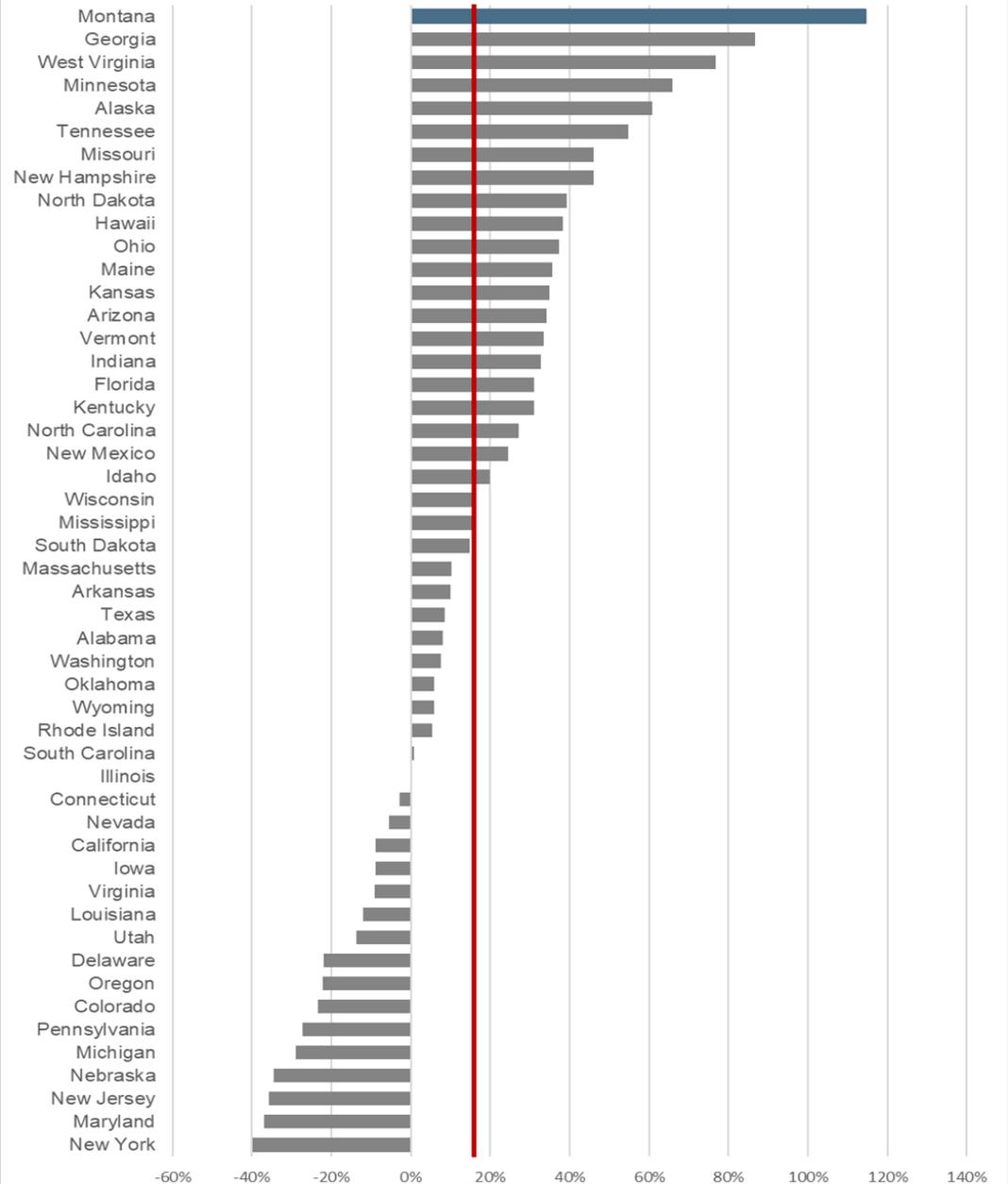


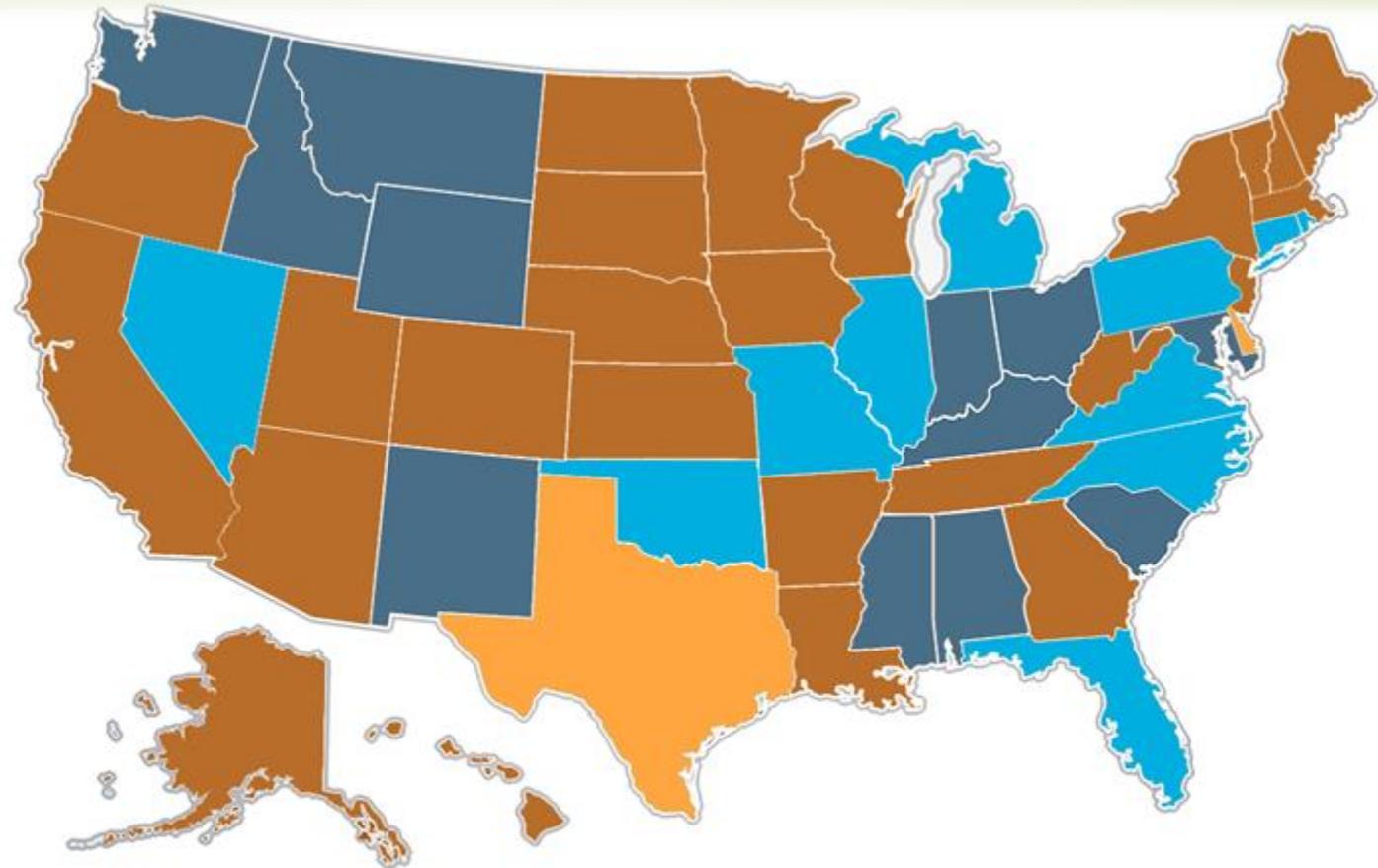
# Kids in Care Growth

➔ Montana's Growth is 28% Higher than State with Second Highest Growth

➔ Pg. 10

Montana has outpaced the **national average** in Kids in Care growth through 2010 to 2019.





Reunification Rate in 2019

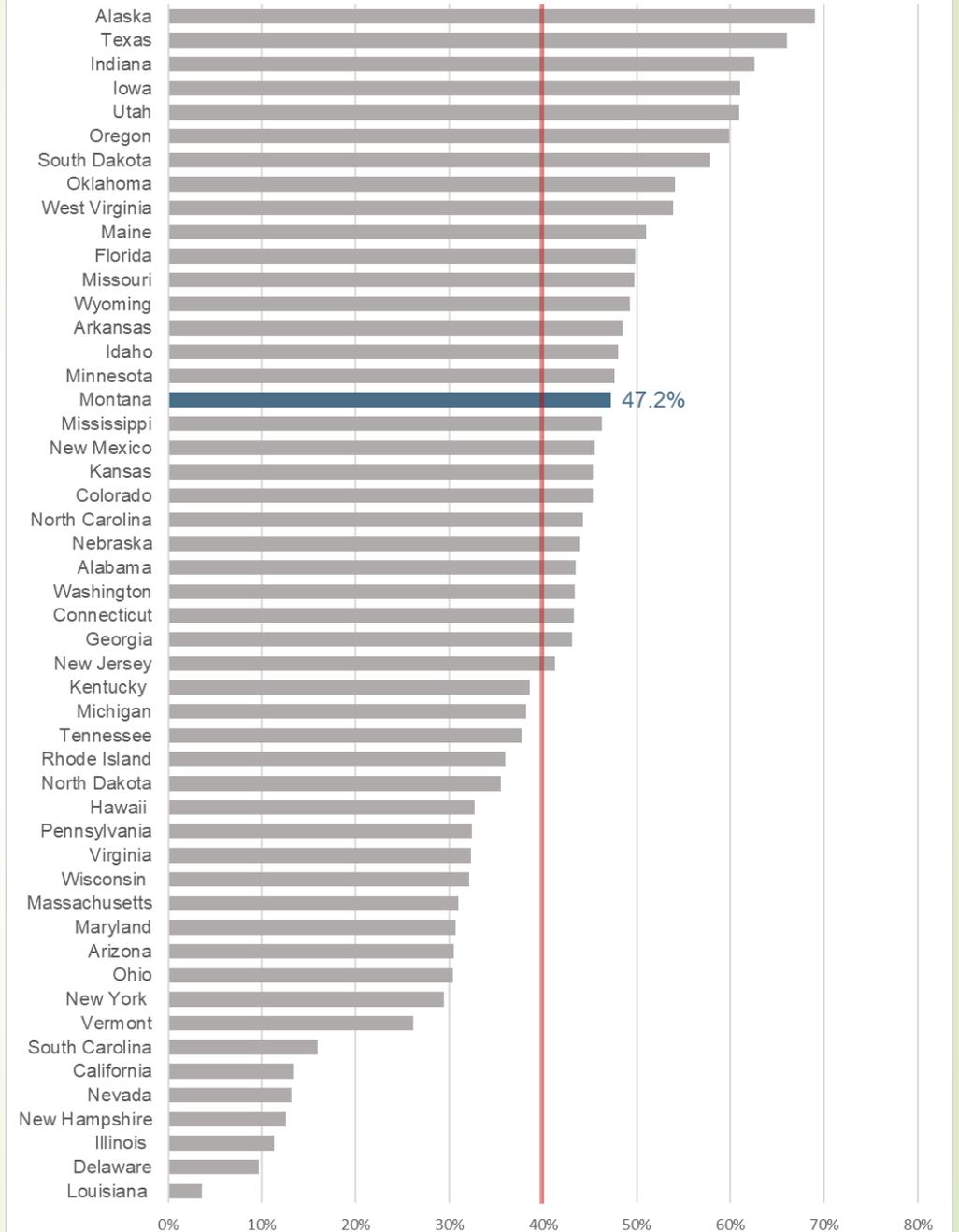
80% - 60% 60% - 50% 50% - 40% 40% and below

# Reunification Rates

# Drug and Alcohol Abuse and Removals

Pg. 15 in the Report

Montana's 2019 percentage of removals where drug and alcohol abuse were a factor compared to the **national average**.

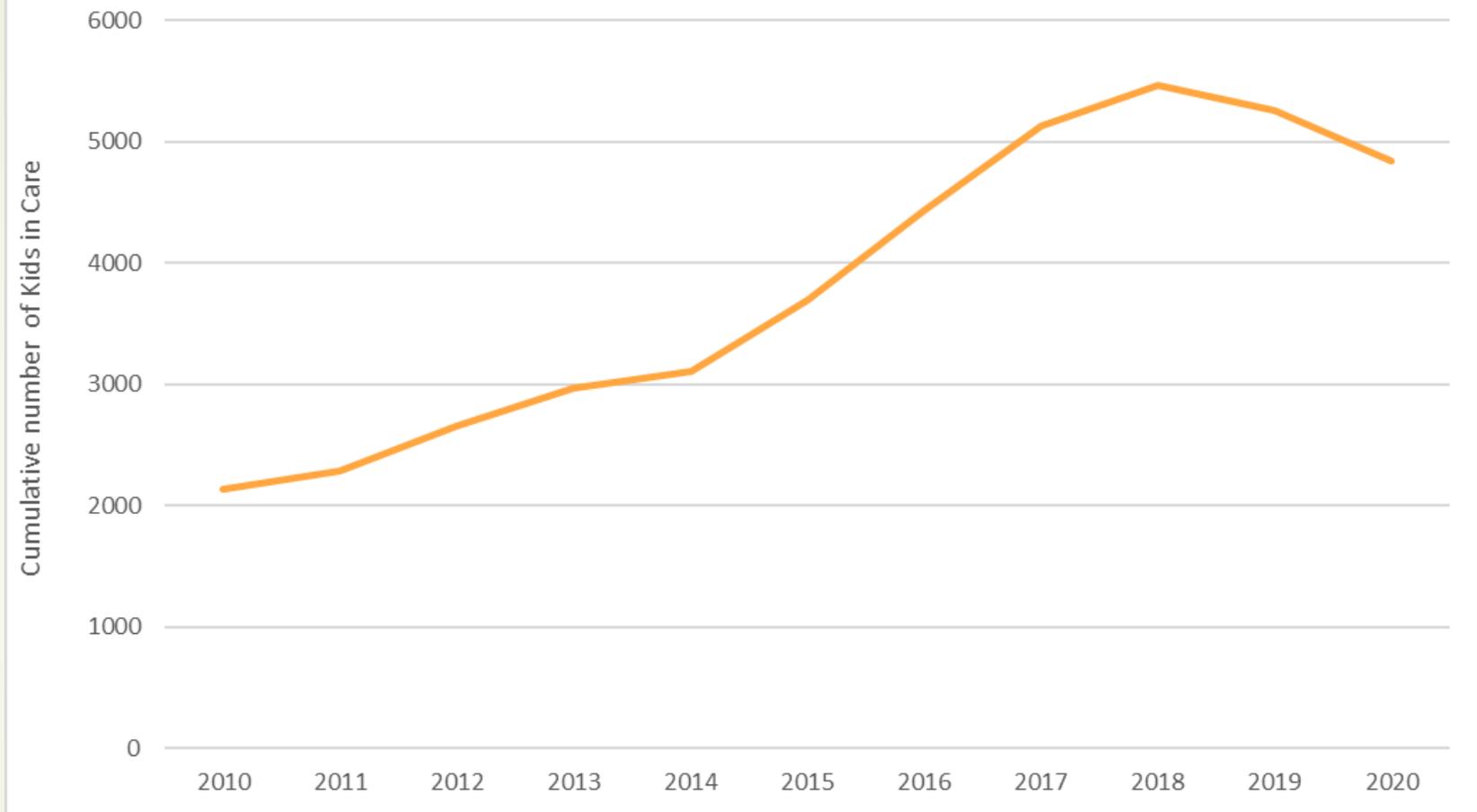




# CFSD Internal Data

- Kids in Care Over Time
- Regional Comparisons
- Potential Drivers of Kids in Care

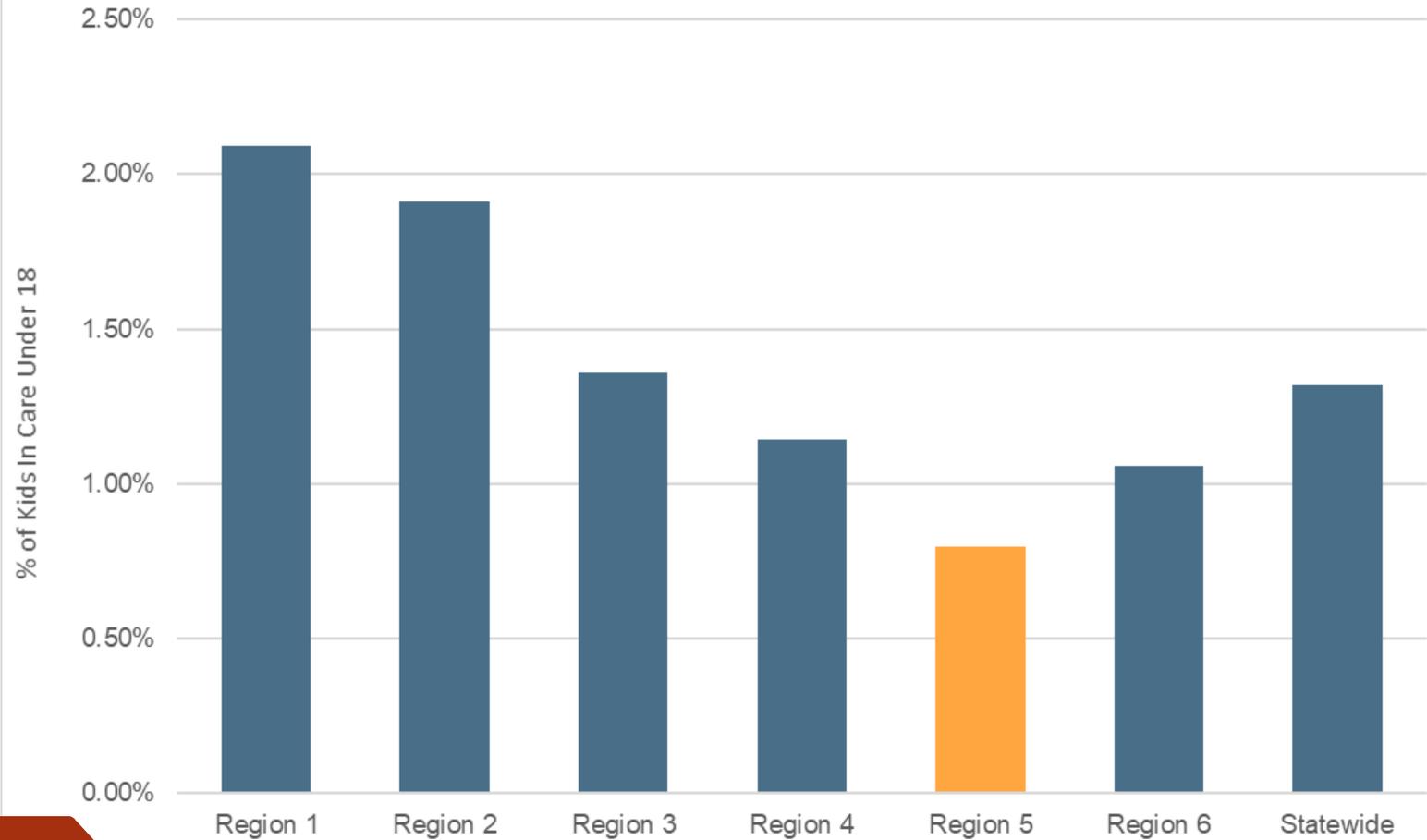
The number of Kids in Care has **increased 126%** since 2010, despite recent declines.



# Cumulative Kids in Care

# Regional Differences in Kids in Care

**Region 5** has shown success in keeping kids out of care.





# Length of Time in Care

61% Longer than a  
Year

2016

2019

48% Longer than a  
Year



Other  
Potential  
Drivers of  
Kids in  
Care

Removal and Court  
Processes

SAMS Process

SAMS Implementation



# Conclusion

- The SAMS model has identified more children who were subject to abuse and neglect according to the courts.
- This has increased the number of kids in care.
- Montana's inconsistent implementation of the SAMS model, among other factors, has likely contributed to the increase in the number of kids in care.



# Case Review

70 Cases from 2019 that  
Resulted in Kids in Care

Six Regional Offices and One  
Smaller Office in Each region

Reviewed SAMS Model  
Through the Court Process



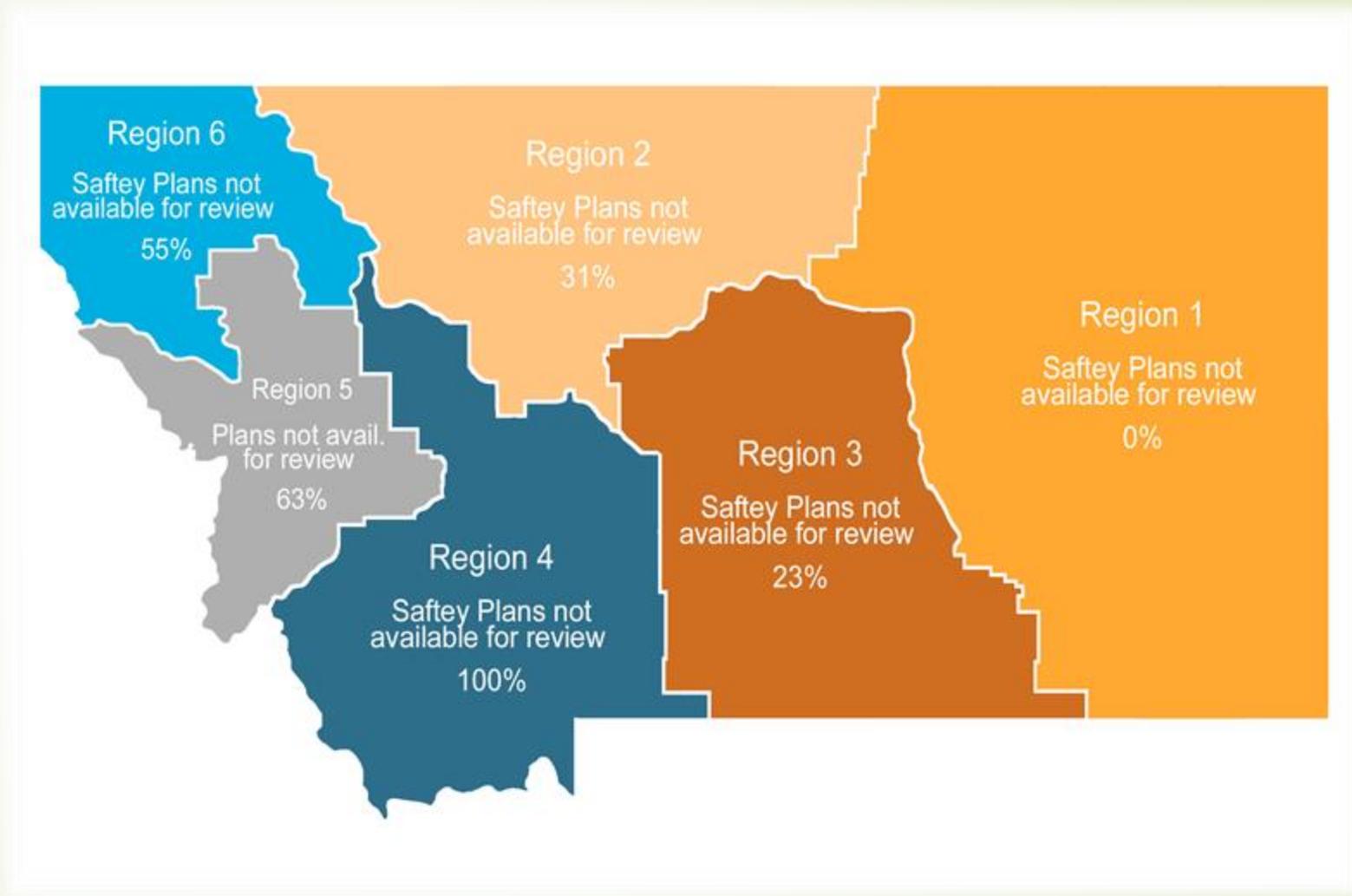
# SAMS Process Documentation and Guidance

Instruction on  
SAMS Documents  
Unclear or  
Contrary to Policy

Regional Practices  
Did Not Align with  
Policy in Some  
Cases

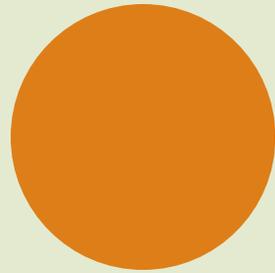
# Incomplete SAMS Documentation

- 64% of Protection Plans not Completed
- 36% of FFA not Completed in Timeframes
- 40% of Cases Did not have a Safety Plan

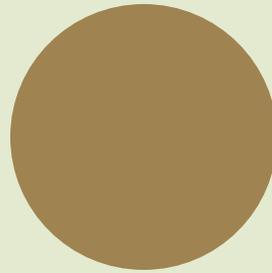




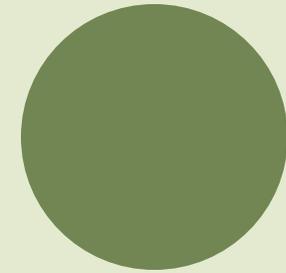
# SAMS Process Reviews



OTHER STATES WITH  
SIMILAR MODELS  
CONTRACT FIDELITY  
REVIEWS



LIMITED CHANGES  
TO SAMS SINCE  
IMPLEMENTATION



CFSD REVIEWS DON'T  
FOCUS ON PROCESS  
CHANGE OR  
DOCUMENTS



# Recommendation # 1

- We recommend the Department of Public Health and Human Services:
  - A. Conduct a review of the SAMS model.
  - B. Update SAMS documents.



## Senior Staff and Management Training

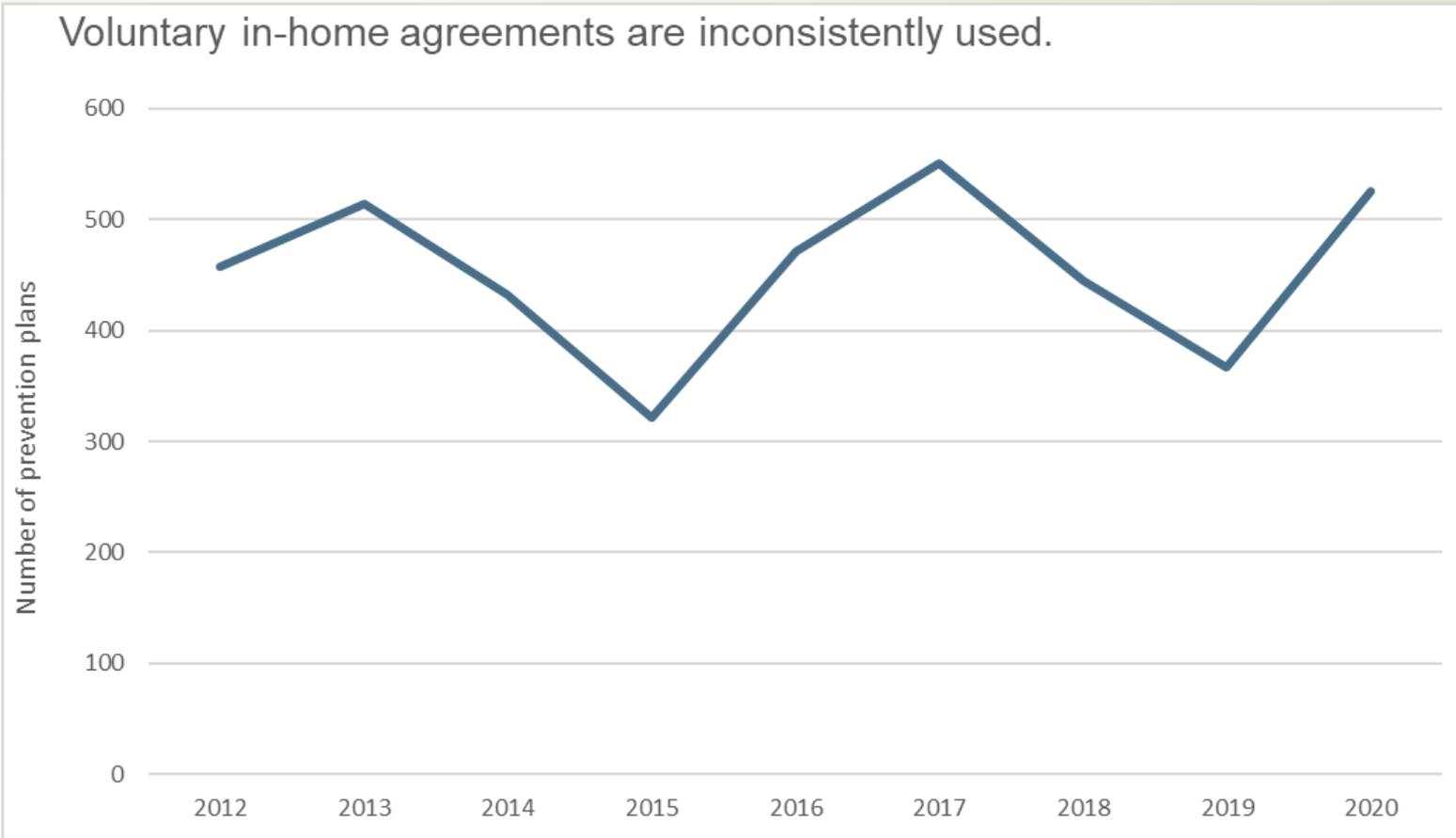
- New Staff Training
  - Montana Child Abuse/Neglect Training
  - University of Montana Ongoing Training Program
- Ongoing Training to Ensure Model Buy In
- Fidelity Reviews in Other States



## Recommendation #2

- ▶ We recommend the Department of Public Health and Human Services develop and provide ongoing training to regional administration.

# Prevention Plans





## Recommendation #3

- ▶ We recommend the Department of Public Health and Human Services:
  - A. Determine through data-based measures that current efforts lead to an increased use of prevention plans.
  - B. Adjust the program if it does not lead to results.



CFSD IT  
Systems

Child and Adult Protection  
System (CAPS)

Montana Family Safety  
Information Systems (MFSIS)

DocGen



Comprehensive  
Child Welfare  
Information  
System (CCWIS)

- Over \$3 million Spent to Date
- Phase I Complete
- Phase II Ongoing and Delayed



## Recommendation #4

- ▶ We recommend the Department of Public Health and Human Services:
  - A. Modernize the child welfare system based on federal government guidance.
  - B. Use the increased data capacity of this system to create and implement a data management plan.



Thank You